



Fact Sheet #3

June 2004

# HOW MEDICAL EXAMINERS AND CORONERS JOIN THE NEW DRUG ABUSE WARNING NETWORK (DAWN)

## WHAT

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DAWN is a public health surveillance system that collects data on drug related visits to hospital EDs and on drug-related deaths reported by medical examiners and coroners (ME/Cs). Since 2003, DAWN has been tracking *all* types of drug-related ED visits and deaths. In addition to illegal drug use, DAWN collects cases related to **adverse reactions** to OTC and prescription medications, **overmedication**, **accidental ingestions**, **malicious poisonings**, **suicide attempts**, and **underage alcohol use**.

## WHERE

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Data collection is currently conducted in ME/C jurisdictions in 22 metropolitan areas and selected States; and hospital EDs are located across the entire U.S. and in the same metropolitan areas.

## WHO

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ME/C offices are chosen based on their metropolitan area and State. ME/C offices responsible for certifying deaths in each of the metropolitan areas are invited to join. Hospitals are selected by sampling.

## WHY

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**Payments for participation—\$500 annual** access payment for each county reporting. **Data on demand—DAWN LIVE!** a secure Internet-based system provides member ME/Cs immediate access to their own data. Authorized staff can use DAWN LIVE! to track the patterns of drug-related deaths investigated, the drugs involved, and the decedents' characteristics. **Technical support**—DAWN supplies ongoing training, equipment, and user assistance.

## HOW

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DAWN collects data on all deaths in which drugs were a causal or contributing factor, as determined by the ME/C.

**Reporting.** DAWN staff work with each ME/C to customize the most convenient and efficient approach to reporting. The following are the primary alternatives for reporting:

- **ME/C Staff Reporter.** ME/C staff collect DAWN data as part of their regular duties. DAWN provides a payment to the ME/C based on the volume of charts reviewed and DAWN cases submitted.
- **ME/C After-Hours Staff Reporter.** ME/C staff collect DAWN data on their own time. Westat pays the Reporter directly based on the volume of charts reviewed and DAWN cases submitted.
- **Westat Field Reporter.** With the ME/Cs approval, Westat provides a person to review charts and submit DAWN cases on-site. Westat hires, supervises, and pays these Reporters directly.

**Participation agreement.** The participation agreement outlines the responsibilities of the ME/C and Westat (the DAWN Operations Contractor) in regard to the data collection protocol, privacy and confidentiality, access payments, and staff designated to access the DAWN LIVE! system. An authorized ME/C representative signs the agreement.

**For more information:** Questions can be directed to the Facility Relations staff at Westat at **800-FYI-DAWN**. Each ME/C will have a Facility Liaison (FL) assigned to be its local DAWN representative. DAWN information is available in publications and online on the website at <http://DAWNinfo.samhsa.gov>.